

# Stop social media misuse: SC tells govt

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**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought to goad the Centre to check misuse of social media platforms for circulating fake news and rumours, saying it could step in to do what is required if there was no action by the executive.

Asking whether the Centre plans to put in place a mechanism to trace the origin of objectionable messages on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and others which have led to mob violence and law and order problems, a bench of Justices Deepal Gupta and Aniruddha Bose said the issue needs to be examined and if the Centre does not take any measures, the judiciary has to step in to pass appropriate order.

It asked solicitor general Tushar Mehta to take instructions from the Centre and inform the court on September 24 about the government's proposal on the issue. "These aspects need to be examined and it requires to be decided. If Union of India is framing something in near future then we can grant it some time but if it is only at contemplation stage, we will have to hear the case," the bench said.

The court was hearing a plea of



Hearing a plea by Facebook & WhatsApp seeking transfer of cases, SC asked the Centre to reply on September 24

Facebook and WhatsApp seeking transfer of cases to the apex court pertaining to regulation of social media profiles which are pending in different high courts, including Madras HC which has taken suo motu cognisance of the issue.

Senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Kapil Sibal, appearing for Facebook and WhatsApp, told the bench that the issues involved in the cases were of global significance and would

have wider implications and the apex court should decide the issue. They said there may be differences of opinion among HCs on the issue and the better way would be to club all the cases together and transfer them to the apex court.

Solicitor general Mehta also said the Centre has no objection if the cases are transferred to the apex court.

Opposing the plea of social media giants, the Tamil Nadu government said the multinational companies had misrepresented the facts before the court by stating that the HC is examining the issue of linking of social media profiles of users with Aadhaar number. In an affidavit filed in the court, the state government said the HC "effectively abandoned" that prayer made in a PIL and took suo motu cognisance on how the Information Technology Act and the rules framed under it should be properly implemented.

"It is further reiterated that the question before the HC relates to the prevention and detection of crimes and traceability of originator of information (messages) to counter fake news and mob violence. This is a question that deserves to be gone into by the HC and decided at the earliest," the affidavit said.

## IT department to consult law ministry

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There has, however, been no official position on the matter as yet, the officials said. The information technology department is expected to submit its stand on the issue to the Supreme Court.

But what eventually goes in the submission in the SC depends on wider consultations the ministry has with the law ministry, which is also headed by IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. The views of solicitor general Tushar Mehta will also be considered.

The ministry has also consulted UIDAI, the nodal department of Aadhaar, but sources declined to say what views it has given to the IT ministry.

The Supreme Court on Friday said the issue of linking social media profiles with Aadhaar needs to be decided at the earliest, and asked the Centre to inform whether it is contemplating any such plan.



# IT ministry doesn't favour linking UID & social media a/cs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The information technology ministry does not appear to be in favour of linking Aadhaar with social media accounts as the measure has the potential to clash with earlier court judgments on privacy and use of the biometric identification card, top officials in the ministry said.

The officials, requesting anonymity, said the measure has to be carefully thought out before any decision to allow any linkage between Aadhaar and social media accounts of citizens.

They added that Aadhaar is not the instrument to catch sources of fake news, or those spreading indecent, provocative, and anti-national information, comments or news.

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**If govt can't stop internet misuse, we'll step in: SC**

The Supreme Court said on Friday that it could step in to check the misuse of social media platforms for circulating fake news and rumours if there is no action by the executive, **reports Amit Anand Choudhary**. The SC directed solicitor general Tushar Mehta to take orders from the Centre and inform it on September 24 about the mechanism the government proposes to put in place to trace the origin of objectionable messages on networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube that have led to law and order problems and mob violence. **P 12**